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SUBJECT: RISE IN ANTI-SEMITIC INCIDENTS IN CANADA

11. (U) Summary. On April 9, the League for Human Rights of B'nai Brith Canada released its 2007 "Audit of Antisemitic Incidents." According to the audit, 1,042 incidents of anti-Semitism took place in Canada in 2007, the highest figure since B'nai Brith released its first audit 26 years ago, and an 11.4% increase from 2006. The audit cited a significant increase in the number of incidents that occurred outside of city centers, an increase in incidents on college campuses, and a new phenomenon of individuals who have spoken out against anti-Semitism becoming targets of retaliatory attacks. Notably, the report linked a November spike in anti-Semitic incidents, representing 13.7% of the total, to the "reasonable accommodation" hearings in Quebec, perhaps not reflecting a disturbing new trend. End summary.

#### TROUBLING TREND

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12. (U) According to B'nai Brith's 2007 "Audit of Antisemitic Incidents," in 2007 Canada experienced 1,042 incidents of anti-Semitism, representing the highest number of incidents since B'nai Brith released its first report 26 years ago. This number also represents an 11.4% increase from 2006, and a more than four-fold increase over the past decade. According to the audit, these figures contrast with reports from countries such as the UK and U.S., which experienced 8% and 13% declines in anti-Semitic incidents, respectively. The audit also stated that, with the Jewish community representing barely 1% of the total Canadian population, B'nai Brith's audit demonstrated a disproportionate targeting of hate crimes at the Jewish community compared to other ethnic and religious groups in Canada.

13. (U) The audit detailed how anti-Semitic incidents took place across Canada, but the majority occurred in Ontario and Quebec provinces, home to the largest Jewish communities. Ontario, Canada's most populous province with its largest city (Toronto), had the highest number of incidents (585), representing 56% of the total incidents for 2007. While previous audits had reported that city centers experienced the highest increases in anti-Semitic incidents, areas outside of city centers experienced the highest increases in 122007. Regional Ontario -- outside Toronto and Ottawa -- saw an almost doubling of incidents, from 52 in 2006 to 95 in 122007. There was also a significant increase of incidents in Quebec, British Columbia, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba provinces, with only Alberta seeing a substantial decline (38%).

#### TYPES OF INCIDENTS

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14. (U) Cases of harassment were the most common type of anti-Semitic incidents, representing 67% of the total number for 2007. The report noted a dramatic increase in the number of anti-Semitic incidents on university campuses, with the number more than doubling, from 36 cases in 2006 to 78 in 122007. In February 2007, a poster supporting a Jewish

candidate for student government was defaced with anti-Semitic graffiti at an Ottawa university. The audit also pointed to annual "Israel Apartheid Week" events at campuses as causing Jewish students to feel intimidated. In addition, the audit cited what it called a new phenomenon of individuals who had spoken out against anti-Semitism becoming targets of retaliatory attacks. B'nai Brith expressed concern that this will have an intimidating effect, leading to an under-estimation of the extent of the problem.

#### REASONABLE ACCOMMODATION LINKED TO INCREASE IN INCIDENTS

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15. (U) The audit noted that two spikes in incidents occurred in Canada in 2007. The first spike occurred in January, with 121 incidents (11.6% of the total) taking place. B'nai Brith linked this increase to Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's genocidal statements against Israel at the end of 2006, as well as the controversy surrounding a Canadian professor's attendance at Iran's Holocaust Denial Conference.

16. (U) The audit attributed the larger spike in anti-Semitic events, however, to a domestic event -- the Quebec Bouchard-Taylor Commission hearings on "reasonable accommodation" of minorities. In November, at exactly the height of the hearings, 143 incidents (13.7 percent of the total) took place, more than in any other month. The majority -- 99 out of 143 -- occurred in Quebec, where the hearings took place. B'nai Brith commented that the public format of the hearings -- which involved individuals, groups, and experts discussing Quebec's treatment of minorities -- "gave bigots a virtually unrestricted public platform" to disseminate prejudices against many different minorities, including Jews. According to B'nai Brith, the sharp increase

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in anti-Semitic incidents in Quebec demonstrates that the Bouchard-Taylor Commission hearings were a "botched attempt" at inclusive public debate and illustrated that "latent prejudice will flourish openly when given the opportunity."

#### CANADA'S RESPONSE

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17. (U) According to the audit, police received reports of just over one-third of cases reported to B'nai Brith. Police laid eighteen charges in connection with incidents reported to police, representing a slight increase from the 15 charges police laid in 2006. The audit stated that police units across Canada "continue to grapple with limited budgets" as they reach out to various communities in their jurisdictions. It also noted that the B'nai Brith League for Human Rights has once again called for Montreal to establish a dedicated hate crime unit. The audit noted that the government has put in place some initiatives to fight racism, including an Ontario government provision of funding to bolster services to hate crime victims, as well as a program to provide federal government grants to vulnerable community institutions at risk of hate crimes.

#### COMMENT

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18. (U) While Canadians have traditionally prided themselves on their acceptance of minorities, even Canada is not immune to racism and discrimination. With one in every five Canadians now self-identifying as a "visible minority," Canada increasing may feel the effects of its growing diversity. However, with 13.7% of all anti-Semitic incidents taking place in November and the great majority of those occurring in Quebec, B'nai Brith's report of a rise in anti-Semitic incidents appears to stem from a specific event -- Quebec's reasonable accommodation hearings -- rather than

representing a broader trend.

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